

PUNISHER



MARVEL 2

AARON · SAIZ
AZACETA · STEWART

PARENTAL ADVISORY



THE THERAPIST TELLS YOU THAT YOUR PARENTS ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED.

THEY'RE FREAKED OUT IS WHAT THEY ARE, AND I CAN'T SAY I BLAME THEM.



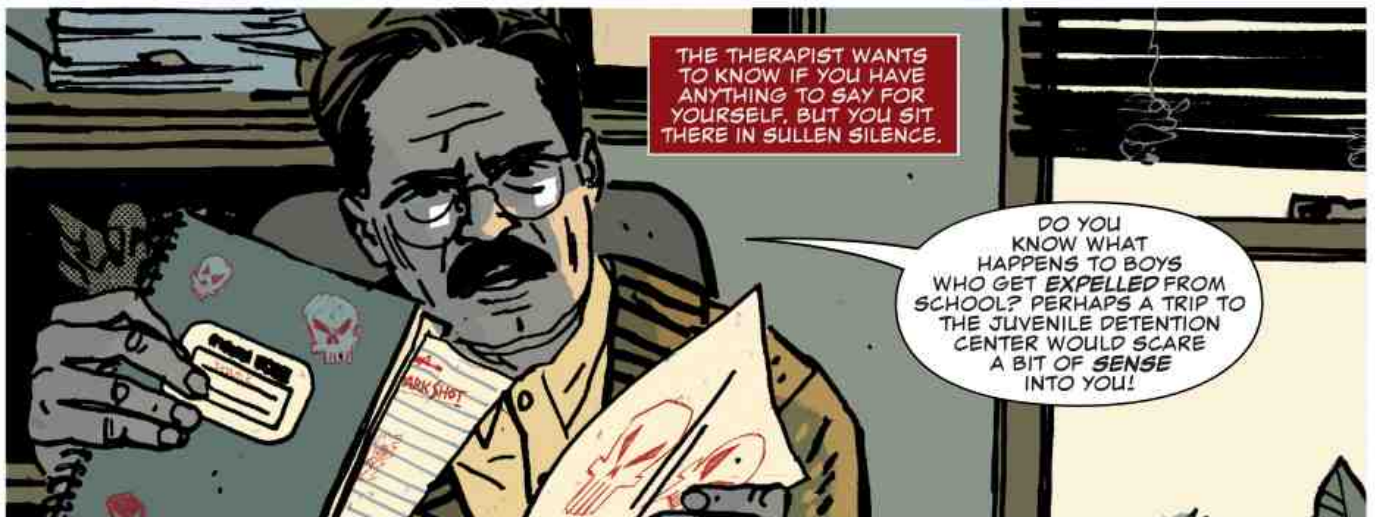
ABOUT THE ROADKILL YOU'VE BEEN BRINGING HOME.

THE GUN MAGAZINES THEY FOUND HIDDEN UNDER YOUR MATTRESS.

THE FIGHTS YOU'RE GETTING INTO AT SCHOOL.

THIS LATEST ALTERCATION... I UNDERSTAND THE BOY HAD BEEN BULLYING OTHER STUDENTS, BUT STILL...

...HE MAY NEVER BE ABLE TO FATHER CHILDREN AFTER WHAT YOU DID TO HIM.



THE THERAPIST WANTS TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY FOR YOURSELF, BUT YOU SIT THERE IN SULLEN SILENCE.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS TO BOYS WHO GET EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL? PERHAPS A TRIP TO THE JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER WOULD SCARE A BIT OF SENSE INTO YOU!



YOU DON'T SAY A WORD ABOUT THE BOWIE KNIFE INSIDE AN OLD TEDDY BEAR IN YOUR CLOSET OR THE BRASS KNUCKLES IN THE SHOEBOX OF BASEBALL CARDS.

YOU CERTAINLY DON'T TELL THE THERAPIST ABOUT THE MAN YOU KILLED.

OR PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO TELL ME WHERE ALL THIS ANGER OF YOURS COMES FROM, HMM?

YOU ARE
12-YEAR-OLD
FRANK CASTLE.

AND YOU ARE
ALREADY ON YOUR
WAY TO BECOMING...

...ALL THAT YOU ARE
DESTINED TO BE.

TELL ME
SOMETHING,
FRANK.

TELL ME
ANYTHING.

TELL ME
WHAT YOU WANNA
BE WHEN YOU
GROW UP.



AFTER RETIRED MARINE FRANK CASTLE'S WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE KILLED BY STRAY GUNFIRE DURING A SHOOT-OUT IN CENTRAL PARK, HE BEGAN A ONE-MAN VIGILANTE WAR ON CRIME. ARMED WITH A VAST ARSENAL AND GRIM DETERMINATION, HE BECAME THE...

PUNISHER

FRANK CASTLE WAS ATTACKED BY THE HAND, A CULT OF ASSASSINS WHO WORSHIP THE DEMONIC BEAST. THIS ATTACK WAS THE FIRST TEST TO DETERMINE IF FRANK IS THE FABLED FIST OF THE BEAST: THE NEXT IN A LONG LINE OF HIGH SLAYERS TO LEAD THE HAND.

FRANK NOW RESIDES IN A FORTRESS IN JAPAN WHERE HE IS TRACKING A GROUP OF FANATICAL WARMONGERS SUPPLYING HIGH-TECH WEAPONRY TO CRIMINAL AND TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS.

THE HAND MADE FRANK AN OFFER HE COULDN'T REFUSE: BECOME THEIR FIST IN EXCHANGE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF HIS LONG-DEAD WIFE, MARIA.

THE KING OF KILLERS

Book ONE, Chapter TWO

"A HAND WITHOUT A FIST"

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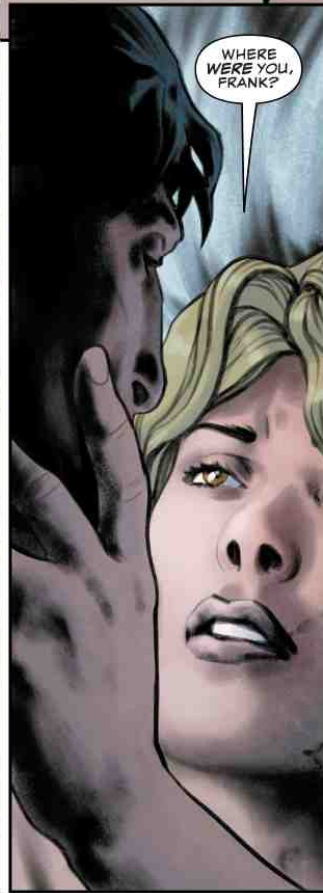
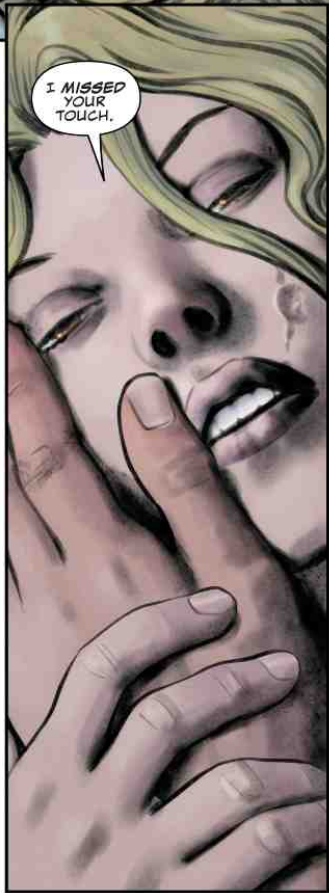
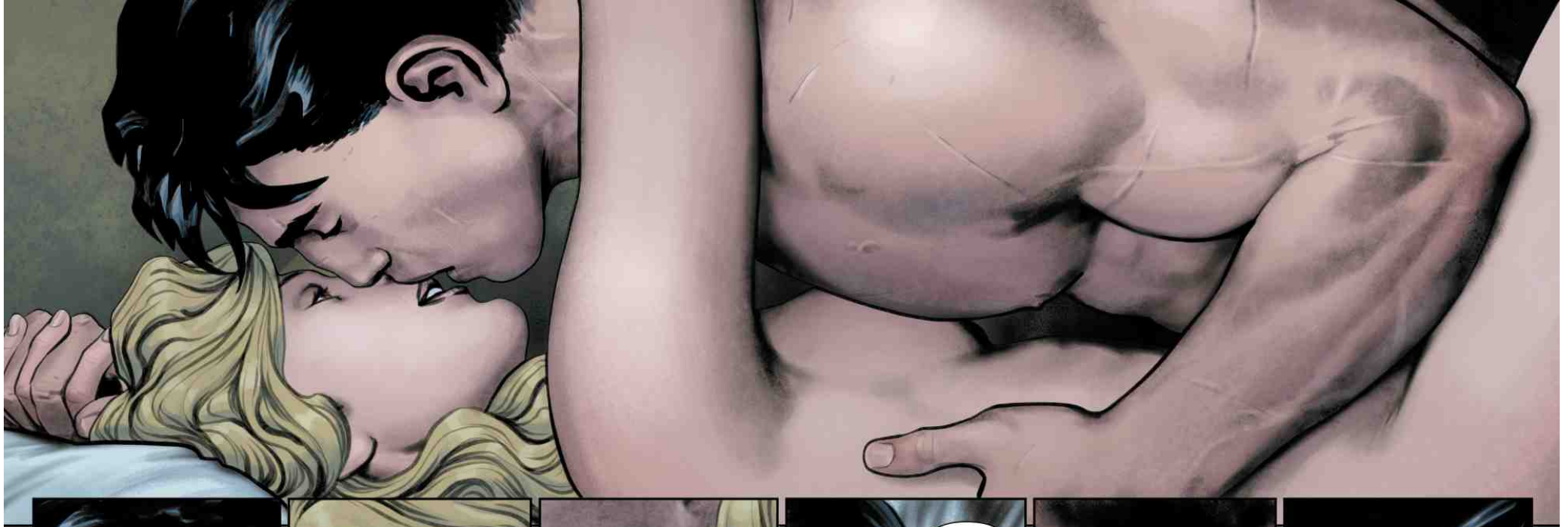
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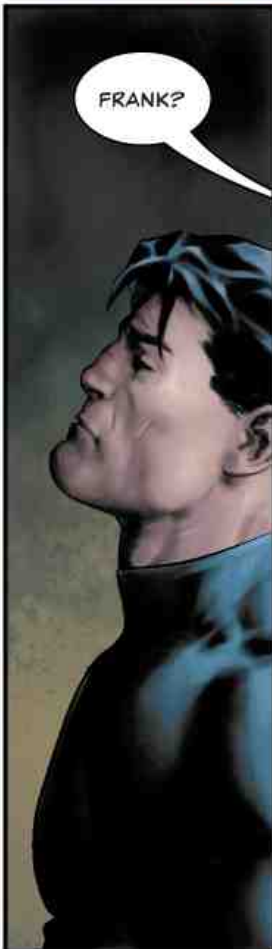
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"FOR I WAS
FORTUNATE ENOUGH
TO HAVE SEEN YOU
AT WORK...WITH A
GUN IN YOUR HAND.



"FLESH EXPLODING
AROUND YOU IN
GLORIOUS RED
FIREWORKS.

"BULLETS SPRAYING
FROM YOUR BARREL
LIKE PAINT FROM A
MASTER'S BRUSH.



"WATCHING THE
PUNISHER PLOW HIS WAY
THROUGH A CROWD OF
KILLERS WAS AKIN TO...

"...SEEING A BLANK
CANVAS TRANSFORM INTO
STARRY NIGHT IN THE
HANDS OF VAN GOGH.

"BUT THIS...HERE,
NOW...THIS IS
MOST DECIDEDLY..."





THIS IS MORE
LIKE WATCHING A
HALF-MAD, ONE-EARED
DUTCHMAN FUMBLING
WITH A THOUSAND-
YEAR-OLD
KATANA.



BY ALL
MEANS, TELL
ME WHAT YOU
REALLY ~~REALLY~~ THINK.



IF YOU
WERE ANY NORMAL
RECRUIT UNDERGOING
TRAINING TO SERVE
THE HAND, I WOULD
HAVE YOU LASHED UNTIL
YOUR BONES SHOWED
FOR A PERFORMANCE
THIS PITIFUL.

THEN
WE GO
AGAIN.

AS I'VE
TOLD YOU MANY
TIMES, NONE OF
THIS IS NECESSARY
FOR YOU TO FULFILL
YOUR NEW
ROLE.



IT
IS TO
ME,
LET'S
GO.





YOU,
WHAT IS YOUR
NAME?



IT DOESN'T
MATTER WHAT MY
NAME IS. ALL I AM
IS A MAGGOT AT
THE FOOT OF
THE BEAST.

WELL DONE,
MAGGOT. NOW
TELL THE HIGH SLAYER
WHEN YOU FIRST
PICKED UP YOUR
SWORD.



I WAS 8
YEARS OLD, IN
MUMBAI. MY BROTHERS
SOLD ME TO THE HAND
FOR THREE
CHICKENS.

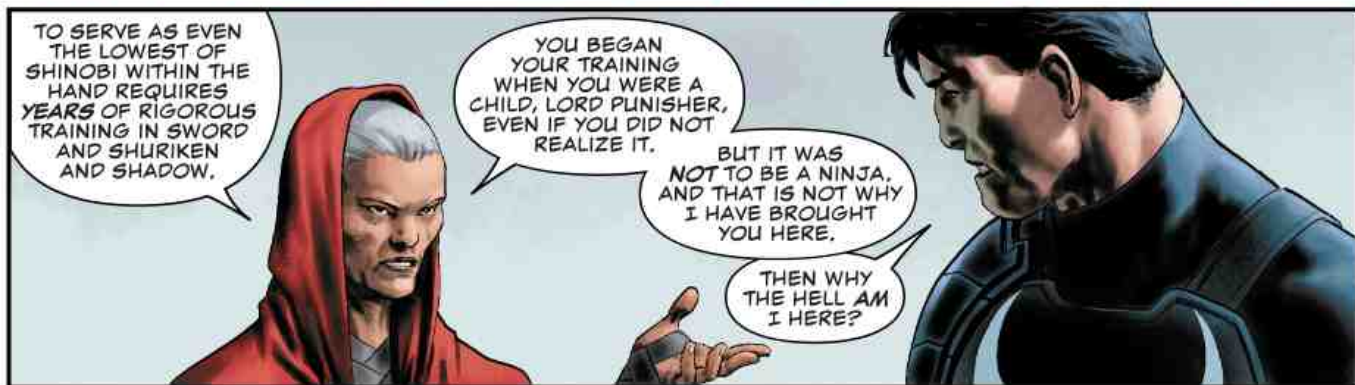


THE
REST OF
YOU.

I WAS 10,
ALONE ON THE
STREETS OF
MADRIPOOR. I
STOLE A SWORD
AND KILLED TO
SURVIVE.

THE
FIGHTING
PITS OF
SIN-CONG. I
WAS 11.

I WAS BORN IN THE
PRISONS OF LATVERIA.
A BLADE HAS BEEN
THERE AS LONG AS I
REMEMBER.



TO SERVE AS EVEN
THE LOWEST OF
SHINOBI WITHIN THE
HAND REQUIRES
YEARS OF RIGOROUS
TRAINING IN SWORD
AND SHURIKEN
AND SHADOW.

YOU BEGAN
YOUR TRAINING
WHEN YOU WERE A
CHILD, LORD PUNISHER,
EVEN IF YOU DID NOT
REALIZE IT.

BUT IT WAS
NOT TO BE A NINJA.
AND THAT IS NOT WHY
I HAVE BROUGHT
YOU HERE.

THEN WHY
THE HELL AM
I HERE?



BECAUSE
YOU ARE
WHAT WE ALL
ASPIRE TO
BE.

YOU ARE
NATURE'S
PERFECT KILLING
MACHINE.

YOU, FRANK
CASTLE, ARE THE
FINEST MURDERER
WHO HAS EVER
LIVED.



HHRGH.

BELIEVE ME,
IT IS MEANT AS A
COMPLIMENT.



THE PRECEPTS
OF THE HAND ARE
OLDER THAN
NINJUTSU, OLDER
THAN JAPAN.



OUR FOUNDERS,
THE SICKLY ONES, WERE
THERE FOR THE DAWN OF
MAN KILLING MAN.

THEY FORMED
THE HAND TO SPREAD
THE BLOODY TEACHINGS
OF THEIR UNHOLY
FATHER.

ONE
MURDER AT
A TIME.



THEY TEACH
US THAT FROM
THE BEAST WE
DERIVE OUR
POWER.

TO
DESTROY.



TO
RESURRECT.

GUGGH!



IT IS BECAUSE THE HAND
HAS **STRAYED** FROM THOSE
TEACHINGS THAT WE'VE
BECOME A PALE SHADOW OF
OUR ONCE FEARSOME
SELVES.





SINCE THE FALL OF THE LAST KNOWN FIST MANY YEARS AGO, I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR THE NEXT INCARNATION.

OTHERS OF MY ORDER LOOKED TO THE DARK MASTERS OF THE MARTIAL ARTS.

BUT I FOUND MYSELF LED ELSEWHERE.

FOR CENTURIES NOW, ONE LAND HAS SHOWN A PROPENSITY FOR VIOLENCE BEYOND ALL OTHERS.

FROM GENOCIDE TO SLAVERY TO SHOPPING MALL SHOOTINGS.



IN TODAY'S WORLD, IF YOU SEEK THE KING OF KILLERS...

...YOU LOOK TO AMERICA.



BUT THERE WERE ALWAYS MANY NINJUTSU ZEALOTS WITHIN THE HAND WHO REJECTED THE IDEA OF AN AMERICAN SERVING AS HIGH SLAYER.



"THOSE MANY ARE NO MORE."



I AM NOW
THE ARCHPRIESTESS
OF THE HAND, THE
LAST TRUE DISCIPLE OF
THE GREAT RED
MURDER-GOD.

AND YOU
ARE HERE, MY DEAR
SWEET PUNISHER...
BECAUSE OF
ME.

AND
BECAUSE THE
GREAT RED
MURDER-GOD
WILLS IT.



THOUGH
YOUR JOURNEY
TOWARDS HIM...
HAS ONLY JUST
BEGUN.



PREACH
YOUR SERMONS
ALL YOU LIKE, JUST
MAKE SURE YOUR
PEOPLE KILL WHO I
TELL THEM TO KILL
AND NO ONE
ELSE.

OR
THE DEAL'S
OFF.

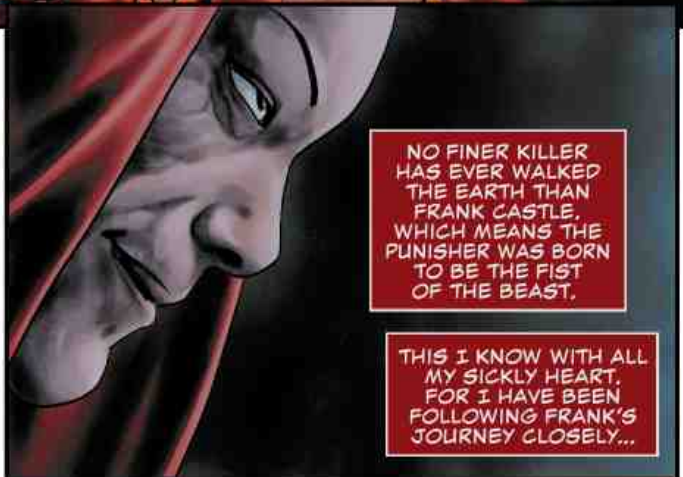


"AND WE FINISH
WHAT WE STARTED
IN NEW YORK."



NO MORE
TRAINING
CHILDREN
EITHER.

THY WORD
IS THE WAY, MY
HIGH SLAYER.



NO FINER KILLER
HAS EVER WALKED
THE EARTH THAN
FRANK CASTLE,
WHICH MEANS THE
PUNISHER WAS BORN
TO BE THE FIST
OF THE BEAST.

THIS I KNOW WITH ALL
MY SICKLY HEART.
FOR I HAVE BEEN
FOLLOWING FRANK'S
JOURNEY CLOSELY...









THE BLACK
MARKET GUN-
RUNNERS, SUPPLYING
TERRORISTS AND HATE
GROUPS AND THIRD-
WORLD DESPOTS WITH
WEAPONS THAT CAN
LEVEL CITIES.

THE SAME
APOSTLES OF
WAR I'VE BEEN
HUNTING DOWN AND
SLAUGHTERING ALL
ACROSS THE
GLOBE.



INDEED,
THE VERY
SAME.



AND YOU
THINK BRINGING
ME A FANCY
MACHINE GUN
WILL MAKE ME
STOP?

WE HAVE
NO QUARREL
WITH YOU, PUNISHER,
OR YOUR NEW ALLIES
IN THE HAND. IN FACT,
WE ARE HAPPY TO
PROVIDE YOUR
SOLDIERS WITH
WEAPONS FOR--





TELL ME
WHO YOU WORK
FOR. WHO RUNS
THE APOSTLES.

SO I CAN
SLICE HIM INTO
PIECES JUST LIKE
I DID YOUR
BROTHERS.

THAT'S
THE ONLY WAY
THIS ENDS.



THERE ARE
MORE GAMMA-
POWERED WEAPONS
WHERE THAT ONE
CAME FROM.

AND MORE
APOSTLES THAN
THERE ARE BULLETS
RIDDLING THE
CORPSES OF YOUR
CHILDREN.



YOU KNOW MY
MASTER'S NAME,
YOU'VE PRAYED TO
HIM FOR YEARS.

EVERY TIME
YOU PRAYED
FOR WAR.

THE
PUNISHER
DOESN'T
PRAY.

THE
PEOPLE
KNEELING IN
FRONT OF
ME DO.

EVEN
THOUGH IT
NEVER DOES
THEM A DAMN
BIT OF
GOOD.

JUST LIKE
IT WON'T
SAVE YOU.



I'LL REMIND
YOU I AM
UNARMED.

YOUR
GUARDS
HAVE SEEN
TO THAT.



YOU
KNOW WHAT
I SEE?







THE ONLY
WAR I GIVE A
DAMN ABOUT IS
MINE!



THERE'S A BOMB WIRED TO HIS HEART. KEEP HIM ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO DISARM IT.

HOW DO I KNOW THAT, PRIESTESS?

THE EYES OF THE BEAST.



ONE OF THE FIVE GIFTS OF THE FIST.

YOU MANIFESTED THE EYES. THE AWAKENING HAS BEGUN.

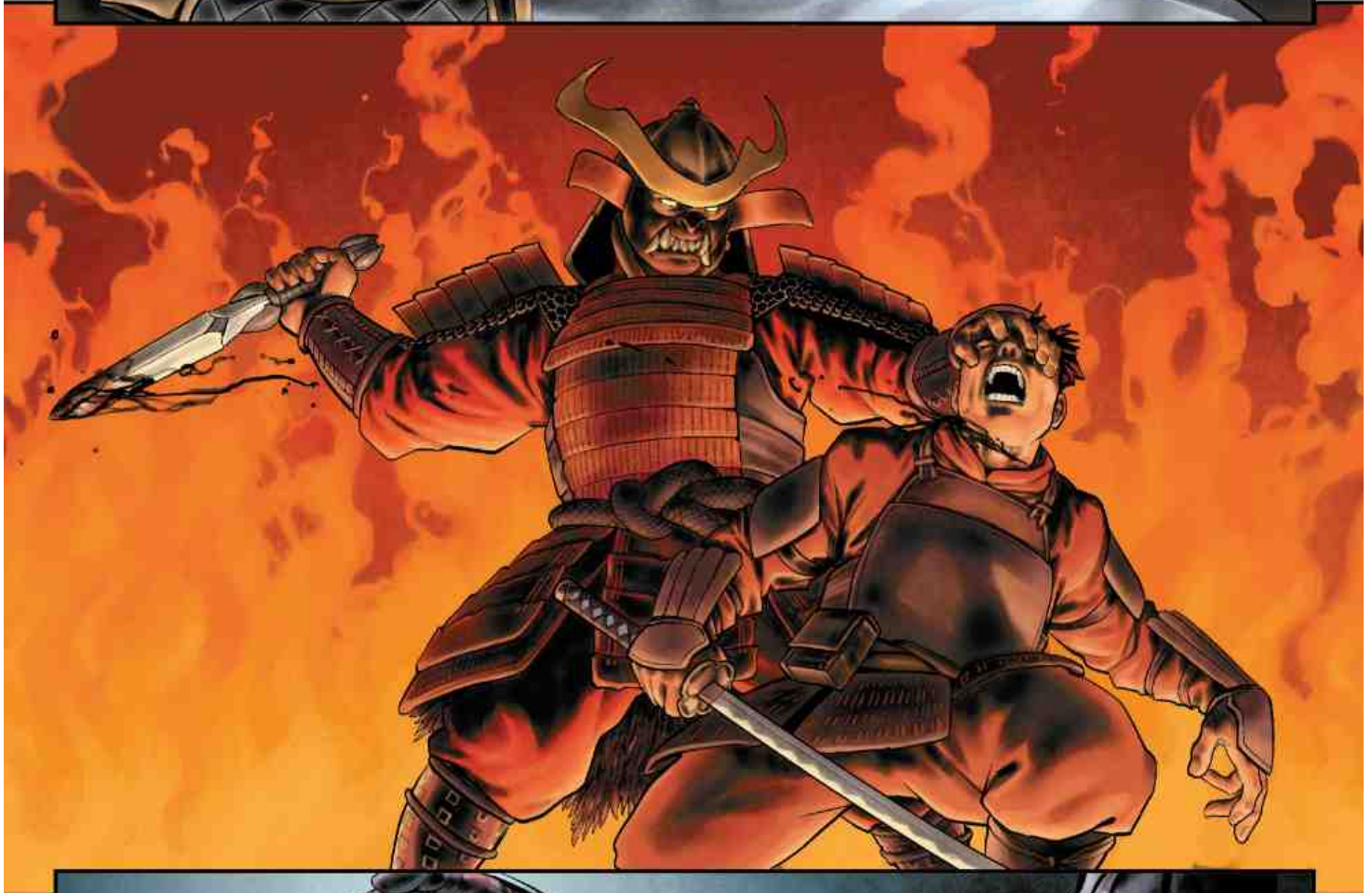
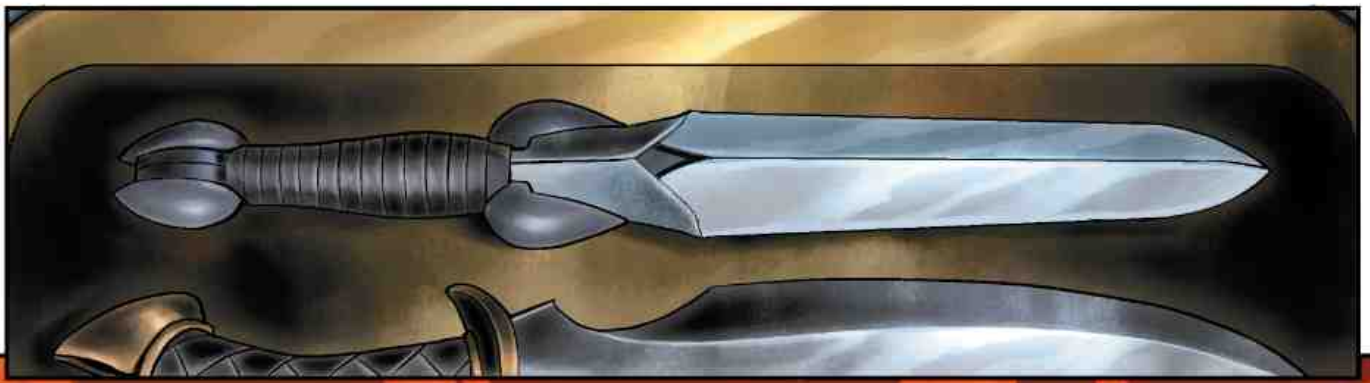
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?

MY LORD, LET ME ASK YOU ONCE AGAIN.



DOES ONE OF THESE BELONG TO YOU?







BEHOLD, THE
MURDER MESSIAH
AND ONLY BEGOTTEN
SON OF THE MOST
SACRED OF
SLAUGHTERERS!

BEHOLD,
THE FIST OF
THE BEAST!



NOW,
MY DEAR
PUNISHER...

...IT IS
TIME YOU
MET YOUR
FATHER.



ONLY THOSE
BAPTIZED IN THE
BLOOD OF LEGIONS
ARE ALLOWED BEYOND
THE VEIL OF MURDER
ARTIFACTS INTO
THIS...

...THE HIGHEST
OF ALL THE LOW
PLACES, THE MOST
SACRED TEMPLE OF
THE SICKLY ONES.

BOW,
OH BLESSED
PUNISHER.



YOU ARE
FRANK CASTLE,
HIGH SLAYER
OF THE HAND.

STANDING
BEFORE THE
ALTAR OF
THE BEAST.

AND
YOU ARE
FROZEN.



SUCH IS OFTEN THE CASE, WHEN MEN STAND IN THE PRESENCE OF GODS.

YOU COWARDS, YOU EAGERLY TAKE OF THE BOUNTY I BRING TO THIS WORLD.

MY MAGNIFICENT GUNS.

AND THEN YOU DARE COMMIT THE GREATEST OF INSULTS.



INSULTS? ALL DUE RESPECT, BUT I GOT NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE GOING ON ABOUT.

WE PAID YOU APOSTLES FOR EVERY LAST BULLET AND BOMB.

YOU PAID WITH MONEY. I CARE NOTHING FOR MONEY.



YOU INSULT MY WEAPONS... BY NOT USING THEM.

RIVAL TONGS SURRENDERED SOON AS THEY SAW OUR FIREPOWER. WEREN'T NO NEED FOR WAR.

WHAT... DID YOU JUST SAY?

LOOK, WE DON'T WANT TROUBLE. THAT'S WHY WE CAME ALL THIS WAY JUST TO MAKE PEACE WITH--





HE'S JUMPING! OH GOD, LOOK OUT, HE'S--



NO. IF SUCH A TAKER OF SOULS HAD FALLEN...



WAR
IT IS.

WHICH
IS EXACTLY
HOW ARES
LIKES IT.



NEXT:

PUNISHER



#3

